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The Worship Musician's Guide To Preparing For Sunday

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(<http://www.davidsantistevan.com/preparation/#comments>)

It's part of what it means to be a musician.

We stand on a stage. People look at us. People love us. We're too awesome.

At least that's what we think.

But the worship team is much more than a gig. Matter of fact, viewing it as such is devastating.



(http://www.davidsantistevan.com/2011/12/preparation/637512_72530350/)

First and foremost, we are servants. We contribute our gift to help facilitate people's encounter with God. That's why we practice, prepare, and invest hours in this ministry.

You see, preparation is essential for worship team musicians.

But you knew that. You know you can't just show up cold turkey; however, it's my sense that we don't know *how* to prepare.

Why Prepare?

We don't prepare because our musical reputation is on the line.

We don't prepare because Joe Worship Leader said so.

We prepare because the people of God are coming together to meet with their Maker.

It's not enough to just show up. It's not enough to wing it.

Preparation means different things to different people. To some, it's simply listening to the songs as they drive. To others, it's something much more thorough.

So I've decided to do you a favor and outline what good preparation looks like.

6 Tips For Better Worship Team Preparation

How can you, a worship leader or worship musician prepare for Sunday? Here's my best advice:

1. Focused Prayer

When you pray, pray with intention. Matter of fact, I would suggest making a list.

- **Pray for your Pastor** – pray for God to fill him with encouragement and revelation. Leading a church is no small feat. Pray that he would stay close to the heart of God and lead with wisdom.
- **Pray for your Worship Leader** – you knew I would say this, right? Beyond supporting your worship leader with musical preparation, pray for God's anointing and strength upon his or her life. Pray for strength to lead people in genuine, authentic worship.
- **Pray for your Congregation** – anything is possible in the presence of God. This Sunday could be a catalyst of change in many people's lives. Pray for that. Pray for the lost to be saved. Pray for people to encounter God.

2. Intentional Listening

You can tell when a musician is prepared or when they're winging it. I want to challenge you in your musical preparation. Before you pick up your instrument to practice, become an intentional listener.

(http://www.davidsantistevan.com/2011/12/preparation/43433812_d19a33b38f_m/)Here's how:

Pull out a pad of paper, listen to the songs for Sunday, and create your own charts as you listen. Chart EXACTLY what you hear on the recordings

(<http://www.davidsantistevan.com/2010/12/how-close-should-sunday-morning-worship-reflect-the-recordings/>), measure by measure.

The goal here is to know the ins and outs of every song in the setlist.

Don't make your worship leader tell you what to do. Don't just fumble through a chord chart. Chord charts don't tell you enough about the structure of the song and what your particular instrument is doing.

Listen very closely and ask yourself these questions:

- When does my instrument ENTER the song?



- When does my instrument NOT play?
- What type of tone does my instrument sound like?
- How is my instrument complementing the other instruments?

Believe me, the more you do this, the more your musicianship will excel. Have everything charted out? Good. Now pick up your instrument.

3. Play It

After you've created your own charts of entire songs, play them through a few times. Play along with the recording. Shut off the recording and play the whole song by yourself. Close your eyes and play it through again. Stand up and play it again.

You don't have to do this for 6 hours a day, unless you have the time. I would recommend taking a day to chart and another day to practice BEFORE rehearsal. You want to enter each rehearsal 100% ready.

4. Practice Stage Presence

This may be a larger conversation you should have with your whole team, but it helps for you as a musician to think through how you look. I know that may sound vain, but it's anything but. People may not always recognize if you're musically prepared, but they can see...you.

Do you look like a bored, lazy bum in your pajamas with Cheetos on his face? Are you as stiff as a board? Time for a change.

It's my belief that stage presence in a worship setting originates in your desire to worship God. Sure, you and your band may synchronize some movements, but it's all for the worship of God.

Are you worshipping? Is it visible? If you're on stage, it's your responsibility to visibly worship.

No excuses. Prepare for it.

5. Set Up Early

There's nothing more frustrating than a musician showing up late, especially if he or she has a lot of setup to do.

Refuse to be like that. If you can't commit to showing up early, step down until you think you can.

Early setup is essential. Not only are you prepared musically, you're ready to begin when rehearsal starts. Sublime.

6. Prepare Your Attitude

I know. You're a musician. You have strong opinions about music. You may have more ability than the worship leader. But remember, you're here to serve.

Before you even show up, decide beforehand that you'll do whatever it takes to serve your pastor, your worship leader, and the congregation. It's not about you having your musical way.

Not only will you humble yourself musically, you'll engage with the entire service. You won't consider yourself "exempt" from the sermon or too important to talk to people. Prepare your attitude.

Question: What other tips would you add to improve a worship musician's preparation? You can leave a comment by clicking here (<http://www.davidsantistevan.com/2011/12/preparation/#comment>).

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